

City Council Meeting

Monday November 2nd, 2015

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to Cambridge City Council on a very important public safety matter.

I
We live in Cambridge on Meadow Way and Lake View Avenue. We have spent the past 2+ years working to make the daily walk to and from school safe for children, adults that accompany them and many other pedestrians. Our efforts have focused on two specific locations both of which you can see in PICTURE 1 – the crossing at Mt Auburn and Coolidge Ave and the narrow stretch of sidewalk along the west side of Fresh Pond Parkway just south of the corner with Brattle Street. We have been told that while these locations are in the City of Cambridge, they are under DCR's jurisdiction.

At the Mt Auburn – Coolidge Ave crossing, we are grateful for the help we have received from the City of Cambridge. Between the City's adjustment of traffic signals and painted out crosswalks and the DCR's assignment of a crossing guard earlier this year, the intersection is much safer than it was two years ago.

However, we have made no progress at all improving pedestrian safety at the second location– the short and very narrow stretch of sidewalk (just 44 feet long and only 55 inches wide at its narrowest point). You can see this clearly in PICTURE 2. Many children walk this section of sidewalk to and from school every day, often only inches from speeding vehicles and the impatient and/or cell-phone distracted drivers operating them – you can see this in PICTURE 3. Many other pedestrians and cyclists use this stretch of sidewalk as well.

DCR has rebuffed, resisted and refused every request we have made of them to address this obvious, serious and very present danger to public safety. DCR refuses to spend even minimal resources to make this sidewalk safe.

DCR's first reason for saying no to us was, believe it or not, that the sidewalk in question was **too narrow** for a guardrail. Apparently, if one adopts DCR logic, the very narrowness of the sidewalk that worries us so much – that puts pedestrians in such close proximity to fast moving traffic – becomes a reason for inaction rather than action.

However DCR's long list of excuses for inaction has also included the multi-year Fresh Pond Parkway traffic study that has **yet** to even start and pending proposals to renovate and restore Little Lowell Park from a landscape and historical perspective. DCR has also cited ADA compliance considerations that would go away completely if DCR would tear down, move, or create an opening in the brick wall (seen clearly in many of the pictures) that pushes the sidewalk section out to the edge of Fresh Pond Parkway.

Two recent accidents at this site underscore the danger we see. On October 14th, a vehicle jumped the curb at the opposite median and took out a "no left turn" sign. The mangled sign was left beside the old brick wall – you can see it in picture 4. Had the accident occurred a few feet away, it could have been a mangled child lying there.

Then, on October 26th another accident occurred along this very same stretch. We were waiting for and received the police report this afternoon. I will read from it. If you look again at PICTURE 2, you can see a car turning left from Brattle and the wall where it would have struck – 4 children would have been between the car and the wall. And PICTURE 5 shows the shrapnel and debris that remain from this accident.

Enough is enough. Before another accident occurs, before a pedestrian is injured or young child's life is lost because State officials choose not to act, we are asking the City

of Cambridge to ensure that prudent steps are taken immediately to make this stretch of sidewalk safer.

Specifically, our request of the City is to persuade DCR to take immediate action, or if necessary act on its own to:

- erect a guard rail or other form of durable traffic barrier between cars and pedestrians along this stretch of sidewalk
- move or remove the obsolete brick wall if that becomes necessary for ADA compliance;
- or create an opening in the wall to allow the sidewalk to be re-routed away from traffic

^I~~We~~ would be happy to answer any questions you may have. ^I~~We~~ will leave you with copies of our prior correspondence with the Governor, DCR and the City of Cambridge on this matter.

Thank you.

To: Commissioner Gloria Sanchez
Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114-2104
via certified mail

cc:

State Representative Jon Hecht
Mayor David Maher
Councilor Marc McGovern
City Manager Richard Rossi

October 16, 2015

Dear Commissioner Sanchez,

We are following up with you on an important matter that we first brought to DCR's attention approximately two years ago regarding pedestrian safety issues in the Fresh Pond Parkway and Mt. Auburn Street areas of Cambridge. As noted below, DCR and the City of Cambridge have since devoted some resources and attention to the busy and infamously chaotic intersections of Mt. Auburn Street and Coolidge Avenue and have successfully increased the safety of many children and families (including ours) who walk to and from a neighboring elementary school (Shady Hill), as well as other pedestrians. However, no such safety improvements have been made to address the other problem that we had identified and discussed with your office, namely the dangerous short stretch of sidewalk on the west side of Fresh Pond Parkway. For your information, we will provide below some background information about the problems previously identified and efforts made to-date on finding a quick and appropriate solution. But the bottom-line is that despite years of

back-and-forth with city and state officials, the situation on Fresh Pond Parkway remains dangerous and we are again contacting your office for immediate assistance.

First, the good news:

As anyone who passes through the intersections of Fresh Pond Parkway and Mt. Auburn Street knows, this has been and continues to be a busy, confusing and often crazy stretch of road for both drivers and pedestrians. But in response to many complaints and concerns raised by neighbors and commuters,

much has been accomplished over the past two years to improve public safety. The City of Cambridge painted and re-painted the large intersection crosswalk, adjusted the timing of traffic lights and delayed the walk signal to allow for safer crossings. After seeing first hand the hazards posed to pedestrians, DCR's Adam Parr and Christine Kurker arranged for a DCR crossing guard to supervise the intersection during the morning and afternoon school commute. DCR Ranger Jordan Braxton's pleasant and very professional presence has increased pedestrian safety enormously and, as a result, the number of kids walking to school each day is growing. We recently emailed Christine Kurker about tree branches that were obscuring the traffic light, after which DCR promptly removed the obstructing branches and improved visibility. Although we are extremely grateful for all of this support from the City of Cambridge and DCR, some dangers remain. Ranger Braxton regularly comments on how dangerous the intersection is, with westbound drivers speeding to and through the intersection and repeatedly running red lights. We have asked the Cambridge Police Department to increase their attention to this intersection, and hope they will be able to do so.

It is worth noting that there were a number of people who have helped over the last two years to achieve these safety improvements, including senior City of Cambridge officials (Richard Rossi, Susan Clippinger, Jeff Parenti), Officers

Rick Riley and Jack Albert of the Cambridge Police Department, DCR officials Adam Parr (Deputy Chief Park Ranger) and Christine Kurker (Supervisor of Crossing Guards). City Councilors Leland Cheung, and Marc McGovern, and State Representative Jon Hecht, and we are very appreciative.

But now for the bad news:

We have had no success in improving public safety along the short (approx. 40 feet) narrow and treacherous stretch of sidewalk that borders Fresh Pond Parkway immediately south of Brattle Street. While everyone who has looked at this small portion of sidewalk confirms the extreme danger posed to pedestrians, and notwithstanding that a guardrail is in place kitty-corner across the intersection, DCR has steadfastly rejected our repeated requests that a substantial physical barrier be placed here to protect pedestrians from the fast moving traffic. Last spring, in a phone conversation, Tom Reece informed us that DCR engineers had reported that this section of sidewalk is too narrow (which is, of course, exactly our point!) and that a guardrail along the southbound stretch of FPP would not be ADA compliant. Our measurements suggest otherwise. Moreover, the pathway width and ADA issues would both go away completely if the old brick wall that narrows the sidewalk and pushes it out to the edge of FPP were removed (or even just moved). Such an action would be unpopular with preservationists who hope to raise a substantial sum of money to restore Little Lowell Park, brick walls included. However, surely we can agree that present day pedestrian safety is the much more important public and community interest to be served here.

We feel like all of the arguments we have put forward in support of our requests have fallen on deaf ears. Our most recent attempt to reach Mr. Reece received no response. A raised (7") sidewalk curb, a completely inadequate solution in our view, which Mr. Reece told us DCR would install this past summer, never materialized. DCR recently told Jon Hecht that DCR now plans to take no action on this matter until the Fresh Pond Parkway

traffic study is completed. Unfortunately, consultant responses to the traffic study RFP are not yet even in hand, and the completion and ultimate adoption of the traffic study and its recommendations are at least many months if not years away. In the meantime, the only obstacle between pedestrians, including our kids, and fast moving Fresh Pond Parkway traffic is a solitary plastic cone, perched atop a derelict street sign base, that itself creates a pedestrian tripping hazard. Just earlier this week, a car jumped the median curb just opposite this dangerous stretch of sidewalk and took out a "no left turn" sign. A picture of the mangled signpost lying on the ground is attached. Had the accident happened on the other side of the southbound lane, a very short distance away, it easily could have been a mangled (or worse) child lying there.

We are perplexed by DCR's inaction on a matter of such obvious importance. Spending a small sum of money now, to add a guardrail, remove (or move) a brick wall and improve pedestrian safety in the very short term, seems like the only reasonable response to this situation. Delaying further action, whether to promote historical preservation interests or to await the results of a yet-to-be-launched traffic study, is tantamount to ignoring, or worse yet accepting, a clear, present and fixable danger to public safety, and is not a reasonable response to this situation.

It is our understanding that DCR is responsible for this sidewalk. It is also our understanding that both city and state officials believe this narrow, unprotected stretch of sidewalk to be a safety risk. Assuming you agree, and please let us know if you do not, we kindly ask that this problem be addressed appropriately and immediately. We also ask that someone from your office contact us within the next couple of weeks so we can hear first-hand about the plan of action and not be left in this limbo any longer.

The attached pictures speak volumes. We respectfully request that DCR address this serious public safety issue without further delay.

Sincerely,

Nina Coslov

Melissa McGaughey

Cc: Lael Chester

Image 1: A group of school children walking along the narrow strip of sidewalk next to the protruding brick wall.



Image 2: Extensive and recently repaired guardrail on the diagonal corner.



Images 3 & 4: Curb where car jumped the road and damaged sign.





To: Governor Baker

From: Nina Coslov, Melissa McGaughey & Howie Rice

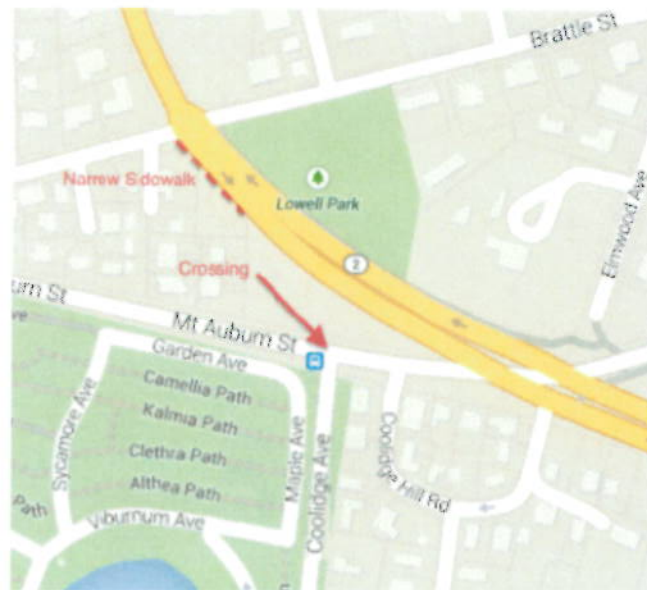
Date: April 8, 2015

Re: 18+ Months Trying to Improve Pedestrian Safety – AN EASY FIX!

We have been working for the past 18+ months to create a safe walk for our children to school. We have been in touch with the City of Cambridge and the DCR. In the service of your 100-Day Reviews, we heard you were encouraging citizens to share their data (experiences). Our aim in what follows is to share our *unsatisfactory* experience with trying to get action from the DCR, let you know about a dangerous situation with what we view as simple to solve solution and hopefully get a safe resolution to this situation in the very near future.

We live in Cambridge on Meadow Way and Lake View Avenue. Our children's walking route to school is along Fresh Pond Parkway at Lowell Park and through the Mt Auburn street intersection with Coolidge Avenue. **Two sections of this route present real danger and require immediate attention; a narrow stretch of sidewalk, un-separated from fast moving traffic and the crossing at Mt Auburn St and Coolidge Ave.**

A 25-foot solid barrier along the Fresh Pond Parkway section between the pedestrian walkway and traffic and an experienced crossing guard/police officer at the Coolidge Ave intersection for 15 minutes in the morning and 15 in the afternoon are the obvious and simple solutions.



BACKGROUND

September 2013 – An email (Exhibit #1) to Leland Cheung's office about the dangerous crossing at Mt. Auburn Street and Fresh Pond Parkway. His office was very responsive and got the City of Cambridge involved which led to a meeting with City officials on October 22nd and our learning that this intersection was not owned by The City but by DCR (Exhibit #2).

October 22, 2013 - On-site Meeting

We met with three City of Cambridge officials Richard Rossi, The City Manger, Susan Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation and John Nardone, Assistant Commission for Operations at the corner of Coolidge Avenue and Mount Auburn St.

They saw and understood the dangers of the intersection and seemed committed to doing something to improve safety. We discussed many options such as delaying the crossing sign after the light changes, lengthening the cross time, painting the road with lines to indicate a crossing and adding a crossing guard. Mr. Rossi said he'd be in touch with the Police Commissioner and would get back to us. He was very open about the trickiness of getting a crossing guard for a private school. We pointed out that we all pay taxes.

Following this meeting:

- Police came to observe and took counts
- Lines were painted at crosswalk and through the box
- Jeff Parenti (city traffic engineer) worked to adjust the timing of the lights many times to optimize for pedestrian safety without causing major traffic backups.
- We received a follow up email from a Police office who had made observations.(Exhibit #3)

December 2013 – March 2014

Nothing happened.

March 2014

We reached out to our contacts in Cambridge to see if the City had any success getting DCR to implement their ideas for enhanced safety. (Exhibit #4 - email)

April 2014

Unsatisfied, we reached out to DCR.

- Email To Ken Kirwin on April 1 2014 (Exhibit #5)
 - We received no response from Ken Kirwin.
- Call to Christine Kurker, Supervisor for Crossing Guards
 - Christine Kurker called back and agreed to come and observe the site later that month. We were informed incorrectly at this time that the

intersection fell under City of Cambridge jurisdiction, so we held off on observation.

May 2014

Jeff Parenti (City of Cambridge) establishes that the Mt Auburn Street/Coolidge Ave intersection indeed does fall under DCR jurisdiction. School is out for summer; we shelve our efforts.

Late August/early Sept 2014

We follow up with Christine Kurker (DCR) and she observes the intersection mid September 2014. (Exhibit # 6).

- Ms. Kurker and Adam Parr (DCR) and a concerned parent also traced the walking route through Lowell Park, along Fresh Pond Parkway. They pointed out that that narrow stretch of sidewalk near Brattle Street is dangerous stretch for pedestrians.
- The Lowell Park sidewalk is narrow, with a brick wall on one side and fast moving traffic inches from the sidewalk curb. (Exhibit #7)
- No barrier and no shoulder exist to protect pedestrians from vehicles.
- At this point we focus our efforts on this section of sidewalk as well as the intersection.
- No further correspondence from Kurker/Parr

October 2014

We learned of a meeting held by the DCR about renovation plans for Lowell Park. The meeting was focused on wall repair and plantings but we raised the issue of safety particularly on the very narrow stretch of the sidewalk in Lowell Park that is alongside fast moving traffic on Fresh Pond Parkway. We point out the fact that children are walking this route to and from school and many people use this route to commute as well and asked the DCR to consider improved pedestrian safety in their renovation plan.

In addition to many attendees supporting our safety concerns, City Councilman John Hecht was there and spoke in support of our concerns as well.

After this meeting we began communicating with Mr. Hecht and his assistant Sam Feignbaum about how to most effectively get DCR to improve safety along this narrow stretch of Fresh Pond Parkway. They offered to do what they could to be the go-between with DCR about our concerns. Despite best efforts, they weren't able to get any action. Through them, we learned the DCR is reluctant to make any investment in safety improvements in light of the large traffic study that is commencing in the next 18 months and the Lowell Park renovations.

This was NOT ok with us. Both of these projects are at least 18 months out from the beginning of any proposals, much less any physical changes! We feel this is an unacceptable period of time to wait. **These two areas need immediate attention.**

January 2015

We contacted Sam Feigenbaum again, asking he relay the request for immediate temporary barriers (e.g. guardrail or jersey barrier). What we learned was that DCR thought the path was "too narrow" for a barrier - **too narrow for a barrier but ok for kids to be walking daily next to fast moving traffic.**

Meanwhile everyone has ignored the Mt. Auburn-Coolidge Ave intersection crossing, citing the [far-off] traffic study.

In addition, the winter months can present additional hazard. Particularly when this narrow passage is not well plowed. (Exhibit #8)

March 2015

We decide to go directly to DCR with a letter (Exhibit #9) to Jack Murray.

We followed up with two phone calls (March 31 and April 2) to Mr. Murray's chief of staff and have not heard back at this point (April 8).

EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT #1 EXCERPT OF EMAIL FROM HOWIE RICE TO LELAND CHEUNG – SEPT 27 2013

Our three kids (10, 8 and 6) attend Shady Hill School. To get there they/we must cross Mt. Auburn Street each morning, from the end of the sidewalk along the west side of Fresh Pond Parkway across Mt. Auburn St. to the base of Coolidge Avenue and Coolidge Hill. At least 50 other lower and middle school kids (by quick rough count) cross Mt. Auburn Street at the same intersection every morning.

Once again this morning, one or more westbound drivers in a hurry (today it was two vehicles, a HVAC truck and a passenger car) accelerated and zoomed through their red light just as our crosswalk light had turned from red to the white "safe to walk" symbol. This happens regularly to us, at least a couple mornings each week. I can only imagine how many times it happens in total each morning.

In very stark contrast, if I drive west on Mt. Auburn Street into Watertown and approach the Hosmer School, I will enter a 20mph school zone prominently marked with a large sign and flashing yellow lights. The cross walk at Winthrop Street, where kids cross Mt. Auburn Street to get to school, is supervised by a Cross Walk Guard who is on duty during the morning commute to school. And Watertown police officers regularly park a bit farther west on Mt. Auburn and can be seen stopping and ticketing speeding drivers. This system works well. Traffic really does move at a very safe 20mph along that stretch of Mt. Auburn on school day mornings. I encourage you to check it out.

Not so here in Cambridge. It mystifies me, and as a parent terrifies me, that Cambridge does not provide greater safety protection and enforcement at the school-access crosswalk on Mt. Auburn Street that our and many other Cambridge kids use every morning. If Watertown can create safe school-access crosswalks on their stretch of Mt. Auburn Street, then surely so can Cambridge on ours. That in this instance (given proximity to Route 2, etc.) Cambridge Public Safety officials might need to sort out a solution in conjunction with their State counterparts would be a very weak and inexcusable argument for inaction.

If nothing is done, a kid is going to get killed in this Mt. Auburn Street crosswalk on his or her way to school some morning.

EXHIBIT #2 EMAIL FROM REBECCA RUTENBERG (LELAND CHEUNG'S OFFICE) TO HOWIE RICE

On Oct 9, 2013, at 2:46 PM, Rutenberg, Rebecca wrote:
Howie,

I hope this message finds you well.

I spoke at length with the City Manager's office this morning regarding this intersection and how we can make it safer for the members of your community. As someone who drives through the intersection every day, Mr. Rossi was very familiar with the problem and shared our concerns about safety in the area as well as our desire to improve the situation as quickly as possible. Because the land is owned by the state, the Department of Conservation and Recreation has control over a number of variables on that street, including paying for crossing guards and other pedestrian safety measures – it is my understanding that they removed funding for those many years back. Regardless, we are committed to finding a solution and Councillor Cheung is very interested in visiting the site with you, City Manager Rossi, the head of the Traffic, Parking, & Transportation Department, & a representative from the Department of Public Works. At this meeting, they hope to explore potential measures that the City can take to improve pedestrian safety at the intersection immediately as well as gather information to provide a compelling case to DCR as to why enhanced safety mechanisms are needed in this area. If you are able to provide some days in the coming week where you are available around 8:00 AM, I will circle back through the rest of the departments to find an option that works for everyone.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information. Thanks again for putting this on our radar. We greatly appreciate it.

With best regards,

Becca

EXHIBIT #3 - EMAIL FROM LIEUTENANT RICK RILEY CAMBRIDGE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO HOWIE RICE - November 7th 2013

Good Afternoon,

I wanted to give you an update on your request to the City Manager to evaluate the safety for school crossings at Mt. Auburn and Coolidge Avenue. I have had officers conducting observation over several mornings the past week and we will continue to observe both the morning and afternoon periods over the coming days. We are working on scheduling a meeting with Elizabeth Reid from the Shady Hill School and that

meeting will take place on either the 18th or 19th due to her travel schedule. The Director of Traffic and Parking has reported that crosshatching has been completed in the intersection to give a visual cue to motorists to not block the intersection. Our Officers have observed that motorists are grid locking the intersection during the morning commute with some frequency.

We'll continue to work with the appropriate agencies on addressing your concerns and I will be sure to pass on any actions we take as soon as possible so they can be shared with all of you.

Respectfully,

Lieutenant Rick Riley
Cambridge Police Department
Traffic Unit
125 Sixth Street Cambridge, MA 02142
(617) 349-3321

EXHIBIT #4 – EXCERPT FROM EMAIL

From: Rice Howie <howardcrice@gmail.com> **Date:** March 21, 2014 at 2:14:18 PM EDT
To: "Rutenberg, Rebecca" <rrutenberg@cambridgema.gov> **Cc:** McGaughey Melissa <rsmmlg@comcast.net>, Nina Coslov <coslovrice@gmail.com>, "Cheung, Leland" <lcheung@cambridgema.gov>

Subject: Re: Coolidge Ave/Mt. Auburn Intersection

We are grateful for the support and progress that was made, and do not want to appear otherwise. However from our perspective the matter is not yet fully resolved. It appears that the City of Cambridge has not yet persuaded Mr. Kirwin at DCR ken.kirwin@state.ma.us to implement the Cambridge Traffic Dept's ideas/proposals for how to fix the overall traffic light/flow patterns at the Mt. Auburn/Fresh Pond Parkway and Mt. Auburn/Coolidge Ave intersections. As a result the traffic at Mt. Auburn/Coolidge Ave remains chaotic. Yesterday was a particularly bad day, perhaps because of the weather, but as we and other parents walked across the street with our kids the intersection was jammed with cars, their frustrated drivers honking at each other but oblivious to the young pedestrians making their way around them. Without traffic pattern changes, and ideally a crossing guard, the intersection remains very dangerous. If these problems are not addressed, sooner or later another pedestrian is going to get severely injured or worse.

EXHIBIT #5 – EMAIL FROM MELISSA MCGAUGHEY TO KEN KIRWIN – APRIL 1 2014

Dear Mr. Kirwin,

We are residents of Cambridge, concerned with the safety of pedestrians crossing at the intersection of Mt. Auburn Street (Route 16) and Coolidge Ave.

As parents of kids who cross this intersection to get to school, we feel it is critical to get a trained crossing guard stationed here to make it safe for children **during the hours of 7:45-8:15 AM and 3:15-3:45 PM.**

As you know, Route 16 is a heavily used commuter artery; this intersection is part of a long corridor of lights that drivers are trying to get through. Drivers routinely run red lights when the walk signal is flashing. Drivers try to squeeze through the light and routinely cause gridlock, through which the children navigate.

In the fall of 2013 we met at the intersection with City of Cambridge Manager, Richard Rossi and Head of Traffic and Parking, Sue Clippinger. They explained that the city has limited ability to make changes to this intersection, due to DCR's role. Cambridge Traffic Engineer, Jeff Parenti, is familiar with the dangers of this crosswalk and has been allowed by the DCR to make small adjustments to light and crosswalk signal timing. After our meeting, Mr. Parenti adjusted the traffic light and cross walk signal timing a bit and Ms. Clippinger was able to have the "box" painted on road to prevent gridlock and improve intersection visibility. However, gridlock continues with students weaving through cars at the walk signal. Drivers continue to run red lights.

We see that the DCR has postings (for past years) for crossing guards. We would like to understand what it would take to make this intersection a priority for a crossing guard in the very near future.

Fixing the traffic flow that causes driver frustration and leads to these behaviors is part of a bigger project for the whole Fresh Pond corridor. However, we have come to the conclusion that to guarantee safety, we can't wait for this to happen and need a crossing guard at this intersection now.

Sincerely,

Melissa McGaughey and Nina Coslov

EXHIBIT #6 – EMAIL EXCHANGES WITH DCR STAFF

To Christine Kurker (DCR) September 22, 2104

Dear Christine,

Many thanks to you and Adam for making it out to Cambridge last week to observe the Mt. Auburn St/Coolidge Ave and Brattle St./Fresh Pond Parkway crosswalk situations. Howie Rice has told me about the very good conversation he had with the two of you that morning. We very much appreciate your interest and support.

That the whole Fresh Pond Corridor is being targeted (and funded!) for improved pedestrian and bike safety is very encouraging news. Though the full improvement program will take years to fully implement, we hope that some steps can be taken immediately to create the much safer street crossings that, as I am sure you witnessed, we very much need now.

Having crossing guards trained and hired by the DCR has enormous appeal. We are very interested to hear your further thoughts about that option, including how Shady Hill School or its parent community might be able to help, for example by providing backup support when assigned crossing guards call in sick or are otherwise unavailable. Additionally, we welcome any other ideas you and Adam might have, or that we might come up with together, that could make the crossings safer.

Could Howie and I arrange a follow-up meeting with you, in person or by phone, sometime soon to hear your (and Adam's) further thoughts on how best to move forward from here?

With regards,
Melissa McGaughey

From Adam Parr (DCR) September 26, 2014

Dear Melissa

Thank you for your follow up correspondence regarding the Mount Auburn Street crossing. This crossing is still under review by our agency and a decision will be forthcoming soon as to what actions will be taken by DCR. We will keep you and Shady Hill school informed of the final decision.

I would like for us all to meet to discuss the issues. I will talk to Christine and get back to you on a date and time.

Thanks you
Adam

**EXHIBIT #7 –
PHOTO OF LOWELL
PARK SIDEWALK
ALONG FRESH
POND PARKWAY**



EXHIBIT #8 UNPLOWED AND TREACHEROUS, VERY CLOSE TO FAST MOVING TRAFFIC



EXHIBIT #9 – LETTER TO JACK MURRAY – APRIL 7 2014

March 10, 2015

Mr. Jack Murray
Commissioner
Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114-2104

Dear Mr. Murray,

Over the past two years, we have been working with the City of Cambridge, State Representative Jon Hecht and representatives of your organization to increase safety along the route that our children walk to school. We are writing to notify you about two locations along this route that fall under DCR jurisdiction and represent dangerous unsafe situations that require your immediate attention.

First, there is an approximately forty-foot stretch of sidewalk along Fresh Pond Parkway at the southwest corner where it intersects Brattle Street and heads south to Mt. Auburn Street. This pathway is narrow and dangerously close to fast moving traffic on Fresh Pond Parkway. No physical buffer is in place to protect pedestrians from traffic. Many school children, including our own, walk this path twice daily, often two or three abreast. It would take very little for a child to slip off of the sidewalk or a texting driver to swerve over the unprotected curb. We are fearful that a pedestrian walking along this stretch of sidewalk will be seriously injured or killed if action is not taken soon.

We view the only acceptable solution to be one that creates a strong physical barrier between traffic and pedestrians. The narrowness of this section of the Fresh Pond Parkway corridor would represent an unacceptable rationale for inaction by public officials entrusted with protecting public safety. To the contrary, the narrowness mandates immediate action. Ample room appears to exist to accommodate an ADA-compliant sidewalk plus a standard size Jersey barrier or guardrail to protect pedestrians. If that is determined not to be the case at the pathway's narrowest pinch point (just 55 inches), the adjacent section of the Little Lowell Park wall, designed for the Cambridge of a century ago and ill-suited to the needs of today, could, and should, be removed.

We are aware of the impending traffic study and proposed Lowell Park renovations. Both initiatives could be proffered as reasons to hold off on immediate improvements to pedestrian safety. We would find this reasoning reckless and negligent. A solid

barrier between pedestrians and fast-moving traffic on this narrow pathway is required immediately, regardless of the scope or potential future findings of these other projects.

The second location we wish to formally bring to your attention, the pedestrian crossing at Mt Auburn Street and Coolidge Hill, is also dangerous. This matter has been the subject of much communication between and amongst us, other concerned parents, officials at the City of Cambridge and representatives of your organization over the past two school years. The City of Cambridge has been very responsive to our requests for help. They have painted (and re-painted) crosswalks, adjusted the timing of traffic signals and dispatched police details to observe and control traffic, and also to issue tickets to motorists who regularly ignore the current traffic lights while speeding west on Mt. Auburn Street.

During separate site visits by City of Cambridge officials and Adam Parr and Christine Kurker from your organization, all observers immediately saw the dangers and challenges and concluded that a crossing guard was needed for safety. All site visitors expressed the view that the intersection was too dangerous for a retired, elderly neighborhood resident crossing guard to manage. While an open job posting has been created for this position, we understand that no candidates have applied. Meanwhile, many school children, and many parents, cross here unsupervised every school day.

To improve safety here, we ask that the following be considered 1.) A police detail (State and/or City of Cambridge police) to manage the crosswalk for 15 minutes (7:45-8:00am) in the morning and 15 minutes (3:20-3:35pm) in the afternoon and 2.) Additional highly visible signage that would alert drivers to the proximity of a school and school children.

We hope that this letter conveys the seriousness of these issues and look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Nina Coslov
28 Meadow Way
Cambridge, MA 02138

Melissa McGaughey
97 Lake View Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138

cc: Lael Chester

SAFE WALK TO SCHOOL – UPDATE NOVEMBER 2015

April 2015

Sent a document detailing correspondence to Governor Baker in the service of his 30 day reviews of state agencies.

April 30th – Call between Melissa and Tom Reece. Tom told us that DCR engineers said a guardrail wouldn't work because the sidewalk was too narrow. Instead, DCR felt the right thing was a 7" curb, which would be installed over the summer.

May 2015

Learned from Christine Kurker, Crossing Guard Supervisor, that a Ranger would be installed in the morning and afternoons beginning May 18th.

September 2015

September 28th - Followed up with Tom Reece via email to see why 7" curb hadn't been installed. Received no response.

October 2015

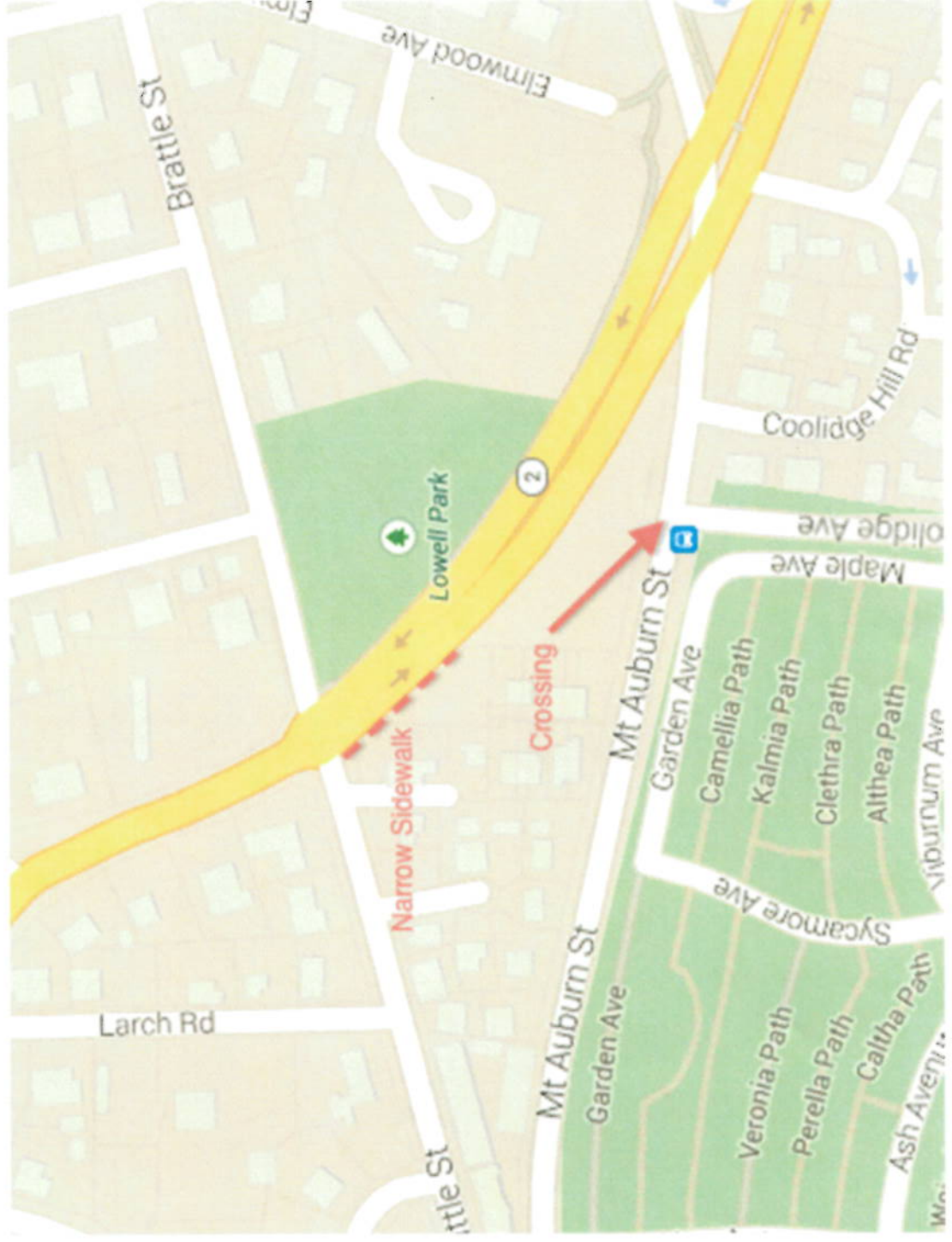
October 14th – Car jumps curb at median on Fresh Pond Parkway and takes out "no left turn sign

October 16th – Certified letter sent to Commissioner Sanchez requesting immediate action.

October 26th – Accident at said sidewalk. Debris/shrapnel on sidewalk. Awaiting Police Report.

October 29th – received letter from Commissioner Sanchez stating that she'd forwarded our letter to Tom Reece and that he would follow up.

Location of Dangerous Sidewalk



Very narrow sidewalk created by wall



Too Close to FPP commuters



First Curb Jump 10/14/15



Second Accident 10/26/15

